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## *House of Representatives*

### **Equal Pay Day: Time to Close the Wage Gap**

*Mr. Smith of New Jersey.* Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Equal Pay Day and call for long overdue passage of legislation to strengthen the Equal Pay Act.

According to the American Association of University Women, women in my state of New Jersey have a wage gap of 80 percent—for every dollar men in New Jersey make, women make only 80 cents. Nationally, it's 78 cents.

All told, over the life time of work, college educated women will lose an estimate \$1.2 million as a result of the pay gap.

The wage gap is not just a women's issue, it's a family issue. Four in 10 American households with children now include a mother who is either the sole or primary earner for her family. Closing the wage gap would allow women to invest more in their children's health and wellbeing and help boost economic stability and security for American families.

As a remedy, I twice supported the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, now Public Law 111-2. By overturning the United States Supreme Court decision in *Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire and Rubber*, we restored and enhanced both the protections against pay discrimination in the workplace and the remedies available for women who have been discriminated against.

While the Ledbetter law was a clear step in the right direction, the numbers demonstrate how much more work we as a society have to do.

Today, I signed on as a cosponsor of the Paycheck Fairness Act—legislation I have previously supported twice when it was brought to the floor of the House for a vote.

The Paycheck Fairness Act would increase penalties for employers who pay different wages to men and women for equal work, create a grant program for negotiation skills training for women and girls, and increase training and outreach to ensure effective implementation.

This legislation would build on the Equal Pay Act and the Ledbetter law by disincentivizing pay discrimination and encouraging employers to enforce equal pay for equal work.

Mr. Speaker, based on data between 2003 and 2013, AAUW predicts that if current trends continue, the wage gap will not close for 124 years.

Over 50 years after the signing of the Equal Pay Act, we are still more than a century away from equal pay.

The Paycheck Fairness Act is necessary to reverse the current trajectory and help accelerate progress to our shared goal of equal work for equal pay.